



Culture in War

Identity ideologies, nationalisms, conflicts: Europe 1870 – 1922

The fifty years that go from the Franco-Prussian War to the end of the Great War and the advent of fascism in Italy (early and precursor totalitarian swing in post-war Europe) marks a new phase in representing the ideology of the ‘nation’ and the ‘nature of peoples’. The cultural processes which, between 18th and 19th centuries, had been used as consistent ideological repertoire for the political foundation of modern European nations, supported from the second half of the 19th century, the rapid nationalistic involution of national politics, functional to colonial expansionism and to the ruling continental objectives, but also to withstand and repress internal social conflicts. A cultural and political transition from romantic patriotism to imperialistic nationalism (that which Muarizio Virali has concisely defined “nationalization of patriotism”), for which those that had generally been considered simple differences of character, customs, and social habits between the peoples of nations are transformed into irreconcilable contrasts: the national state is the emanation of a homogeneous people, of a race, and the unshakeable otherness of the foreigner reflects and consolidates this belief. Making use of the instruments provided by disciplines such as socio-psychology, social anthropology, biology, social Darwinism, and with the approximate simplifications of those like Gobineau, Chamberlain, Nordau, Langbehn etc., it is believed that the character of peoples may be defined and thus mark national identities within an all absorbing viewpoint.

If in a philosophical field, with the project of a general human science, to which the research of a rooting in the concreteness of historical and national conditions lends weight, and also the awareness of the environmental determination of life forms corresponds to the first outline of a bio-politic centred on the notion of peoples. For its part, the literature has as much a fundamental role in the realisation of this scenario, both the “high” and the “popular”. Literary tradition and its national identity repertoire identification have had a crucial function in the identification of the idea of the modern nation – in terms of common imagination, rhetoric, cultural genealogies: take Italy for example – but its role in the codification of nationalism in the five hundred years under scrutiny is no less decisive. A process of nationalisation of the masses that involves at least two generations of writers and intellectuals and which also finds the literature of the genre and entertainments a diverse and penetrating channel of ‘propaganda’ addressed to a new and numerous reading public. Developed around the middle of 19th century, also thanks to the cultural transformations under way and to a new political editorial, the literature “of wide consumption” spread, in fact, in numerous texts, the image of a hostile otherness, frequently thematizing in emphatic and tendentious ways religious conflicts (the contrast between Catholics, Protestants and the Orthodox Church, between Christianity, Judaism and Islamism, constitutes a characteristic element).

Also the new forms of visual representation, prose and musical theatre, some experiments and innovations in figurative arts (for instance Futurist avant-garde), not least the artistic forms derived from the new image technologies – photography and cinema – contribute in a decisive way to spread nationalistic ideologies and foment this *Zeitgeist* and above all transmit and allegorise almost iconic images of national identity that is of hostile otherness and enemies.



The conference promoted by the department of Humanistic Sciences of the University of Palermo intends to document, discuss and problematise all the themes discussed, and therefore the role of the artistic and cultural production and the apparatus connected to it (processes of transmission and reception in the critical field historiography, political cultures of national states) in the construction and consolidation of ideologies and nationalistic sentiment and xenophobes and in the codification and diffusion both of the functional dominant cultural identity models to this aim and their mirrored counter models (the implacable otherness of the foreigner as regards the co-national above all; but also that of women, homosexuality and in general of the “non-male” in regard to the male in the cultural processes of the “virilization” of the nation).

The disciplinary fields of interest to the themes of the conference, therefore, include historical and philosophical studies, linguistics, historiography and literary criticism, music, cinema and performance.

The conference will be held in Palermo on May 14-16, 2014.

Proposals of participation, accompanied by an abstract which briefly illustrates the contents of the paper and a biobibliographical note of the proposer, should reach us before 30 June 2013 at the following e-mail address: lucia.bonafede@unipa.it. culturainguerra2014@unipa.it.

By 30 September, the Scientific Committee will communicate the list of accepted proposals.

Papers should be in Italian and in English and should last no more than 20 minutes.

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